

RENAISSANCE®

# Reading success

IN

## Weston-super-Mare

We spoke with Rachel Allchurch, the Library Manager at Hans Price Academy, about how they've been using Accelerated Reader to contribute to the whole academy's continuing success.

# Making gains across the whole curriculum

Hans Price Academy is a secondary academy in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, with around 950 pupils. The school has some impressive stats to its name, including a 'Good' Ofsted inspection report and an increasing Progress 8 score.

### It all started four years ago...

We initially implemented Accelerated Reader and Star Reading four years ago to help ensure our library-based reading sessions were purposeful and that our students were not only reading for pleasure, but also reading to challenge themselves so every student was able to grow in confidence as a reader. We quickly discovered that our students became hooked into the competitive, quizzing aspect of the programme. Our self-identified "readers" enjoyed having a platform to track and showcase their reading and the competitive aspect, and instant feedback gave our reluctant students a reason to engage with reading at a level where they could feel successful. The staff at Hans Price Academy now have a better understanding of reading ages for all students which makes tracking reading progress, and intervening where necessary, a faster and clearer process.

Originally, we started with Years 7 and 8 using Accelerated Reader. We now include key groups of Year 9 students who have been identified as requiring support with literacy. They have dedicated time in their day, outside of the main curriculum, to use AR to continue to track their progress.

It gives every student an achievable route to success and rewards and encourages them to keep exploring books and find the ones they enjoy reading.

## Out for the count

Every time a student finishes reading a book and then takes the Accelerated Reader quiz, the programme is accumulating the total number of words they've read across all of their books. Discovering and showcasing our Word Millionaires has been hugely successful! It allows us to reward those pupils who are embracing reading and wanting to actively develop their reading levels. We display leader boards of Word Millionaires that are available for all pupils to see and encourage a healthy ambition to read more! Our academy is split into four Colleges and word count, quizzes passed and Word Millionaires are all awarded college points. In this way, reading features alongside sports performance, charity fundraising, approach to learning, participation in the Arts and upholding the academy ethos.

I can think of one student who, before Accelerated Reader, wasn't necessarily reading very much: but now they have a tangible goal to meet – to finish books, to pass their quizzes and keep their word count higher than their friends – and this is enough to encourage them into reading more than they ever have before.

But as well as this, teachers can use the various AR reports to really track how much of the literature students are absorbing and, more importantly, understanding. The unique target for each student allows us to identify who is meeting their potential and compare between different types of readers. For instance, one pupil might struggle to engage with longer, more complex novels and therefore read a lot of smaller texts. Their word count will never be one of the highest, but they can be rewarded for continuing to push themselves by being one of the top quizzers. Another pupil might be drawn into longer novels and may be quizzing less frequently, but they can be rewarded for their growing word count. It gives every student an achievable route to success and rewards and

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encourages them to keep exploring books and find the ones they enjoy reading.

## Library lessons with Accelerated Reader

As the librarian I run library lessons with our English teachers and additional members of staff. The lessons are built around dedicated independent reading time, reading to staff and quizzing and are guided by AR data. Students are comfortably in the habit of finishing a book and taking the quiz before moving on to the next book. They enjoy sharing their results and asking for guidance on what to read next.

I've seen students that come back to the library after school who want to finish their book, quiz on it and then print off the TOPS (The Opportunity to Praise Students) report that they're given afterwards, just to show me how much progress they're making! I've found that students constantly want to know how they're progressing, and the validation of success hooks them in and encourages them to read more.

## A fundamental tool

For staff, Accelerated Reader is a fundamental tool because it flags up students who would've otherwise been cruising by under the radar. Now we can identify those students, who may not necessarily be reading as much as they could or



progressing as well or fast as we predicted, and we can focus on those students to ensure they remain stimulated and want to keep reading. Additionally, we use the data provided by Star Reading and other AR reports to highlight who is or isn't on track, and that allows staff to have discussions about how to best put in place early and appropriate interventions.

We ensure that students carry out Star Reading tests at least three times a year. After the middle test I'll collate the data and present it to illustrate how many quizzes have been taken and how many words read. From this information, I can spot the pupils that I know are capable of doing more than their reading data suggests, as well as those who are overachieving! Doing this makes it easier for staff to keep up motivation for the rest of the year.

Star Reading data is also linked to our school's SIMS, which allows us to include reading levels within each individual student's profile, meaning that the sharing of reading information and student ability is as easy as ever for teachers throughout the school.

### **Curriculum-wide success**

We've definitely seen a new culture of reading here. Students are reading more because they want to, and this has been evident in our improving progress and attainment. I feel that the school's ethos and culture has changed, and now we're a school that celebrates reading

daily. Staff are talking more about reading and appreciate the value of strong literacy levels. We hold assemblies focused on reading, have dedicated whole academy reading time, feature reading in staff training sessions and we celebrate a number of external reading events such as World Book Day!

We've seen a huge proportion of students whose reading levels have shot up. One great example is two boys who, when they started using AR, adopted a friendly competition between each other to see who could read more words and pick up more books. This resulted in both boys' reading ages increasing by over two years. To this day, they're still recommending books to each other, which is unbelievable considering they weren't interested in picking up a book in Year 7. This success has been noticed in other subjects by other teachers too – proving that with strong literacy levels students can make gains across the whole curriculum.

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